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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 TAIPEI 003076

SIPDIS

STATE PLEASE PASS TO AIT/W AND EAP/RSP/TC

STATE PLEASE ALSO PASS TO USEPA/OIA

FROM AIT KAOHSIUNG BRANCH OFFICE

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: AMGT SENV ECON KSCA KPAQ TW ESTH

SUBJECT: TYPHOON HAITUNG CONTINUES TO POUND SOUTHERN TAIWAN

TAIPEI 02641, 03073

UNCLASSIFIED

SIPDIS

¶1. Summary. While rains have abated in northern Taiwan, Typhoon Haitang and subsequent heavy rains are continuing to pound southern Taiwan. In addition to the impacts reported in reftel b, the storm has caused extensive damage to roads and bridges, destroyed several homes and stranded residents and travelers in Kenting and Green Island. Kaohsiung Harbor has experienced serious impact, with a stranded freighter outside the port and several containers washed overboard inside the port. Damage estimates continue to rise, with current estimates in excess of US\$ 80 million. Rains are expected to continue unabated for the next thirty-six hours, preventing repair work on bridges and roads damaged by the storm. End Summary

¶2. Virtually all areas of southern Taiwan have received in excess of 1300 mm of rainfall, leading to large numbers of mudslides, flooding and destruction of homes. More than twenty homes have been washed into local rivers in Taitung, Pingtung and Kaohsiung counties. Relief work is limited to emergency measures only, with substantial repairs to begin when the storm abates.

¶3. On-going rains continue to cause tremendous damage to the roadways and bridges in Southern Taiwan. In Pingtung County, a 30 meter-long landslide damaged the Fengkung Bridge linking Pingtung and Hengchun Peninsula. Four houses alongside the bridge and other businesses crashed into the river as a result of the landslide. Local residents and businesses near the bridge and landslide were evacuated to elevated shelters. With the bridge down and road travel impossible, more than 3000 tourists and 200,000 local residents are stranded in the Kenting area. Efforts to move people by helicopter to Hengchun Airport and on to Taipei by commercial air have been hampered by continuing heavy thunderstorm activity.

¶4. Fifteen bridges in Pingtung County were closed and nine townships were completely cut off. Water supply to the southern part of Pingtung County was suspended when the water pipeline was damaged by mudslides. Officials are estimating a minimum of three days to effect temporary repairs once the rains stop. In Kaohsiung County, more than thirty kilometers of route 24 have been inundated by landslides, making travel in the area virtually impossible.

¶5. In Taitung County, sixteen houses in Chialan Village were washed into the river by the flood. Four hundred local residents in Taimali and Tawu area were evacuated to a community center. Taitung County Magistrate Hsu Ching-yuan gave relief funds to the villagers and said the county authorities would build temporary houses for the villagers once the water recedes. Flights between Green Island, Orchid Island and Taiwan were canceled because of the bad weather. 1,582 tourists were stranded in Green Island. The southern cross-island railroad transportation has been suspended. At present, Taitung County can only be accessed via air transport from Taipei.

¶6. The storm has caused substantial disruption to operations in Kaohsiung Harbor. A gravel freighter sailing between Anping Harbor and Kaohsiung Harbor was stranded outside of Kaohsiung Harbor after losing power due to the bad weather. Eleven of twenty-two crewmen were rescued by helicopter. The Taiwan Coast Guard is continuing rescue operations for the remaining crew and is taking steps to prevent the ship from spilling fuel. Twenty-three containers onboard a container ship at anchor in Kaohsiung Harbor were washed overboard by high waves. The cargo from those containers is scattered around the Shiziwan Beach at the mouth of the harbor.

¶7. In earlier incidents, a local cargo vessel carrying sand and stone ran aground 500 feet off the Nanliaoj fishing harbor in Kaohsiung County, on July 18. On the same day, a Korean oil tanker was stranded off the Chijin Island, the

barrier island of Kaohsiung Harbor. All crewmen of the local vessel were rescued, and the Korean oil tanker regained steerage and left the area. Kaohsiung Harbor Authority has formed a special inter-agency task force to manage the crisis.

18. Despite the scale of the storm damage, local authorities have no reports of U.S. citizens in distress. Contact with local wardens also indicates that no Amcits are known to have suffered serious loss or injury. Travel throughout Southern Taiwan remains extremely hazardous. While Kaohsiung City and Tainan City have largely removed downed trees and debris, traffic remains snarled by malfunctioning traffic lights, heavy rain and high water. In the remainder of the district, travel is virtually impossible.

Johnson

Paal